## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

Edelsberg - 343-5634

For Release to PM's January 6, 1966

WHOOPER JOSEPHINE DIED OF HEART FAILURE, AUTOPSY SHOWS

Josephine, 28-year-old matriarch of the whooping crane flock at the Audubon Park Zoo, New Orleans, La., died last September of acute heart failure caused by advanced age and possible stresses brought on by Hurricane Betsy, an autopsy has revealed. The autopsy and extensive studies were conducted at the Department of the Interior's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Md., and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington, D. C.

The elderly crane was the mother of four of the six whoopers at the zoo, the only existing flock outside the wild population of 44 now wintering at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas. Audubon Park Zoo is the only place where whoopers have been hatched and reared in captivity.

Josephine was the pride of conservationists throughout the United States who were concerned with the declining population of wild whoopers and saw in propagation of captive birds a possible way to bolster the wild population. Birds reared in captivity would be trained to rejoin their high-flying wild cousins. Today, the Fish and Wildlife Service is studying the rearing of captive whoopers by using their near relatives, the more common sandhill cranes.

Josephine was a storm-tossed bird. In 1940, she was one of an estimated 13 cranes native to the Louisiana marshlands. A hurricane scattered the flock and only two survived: Mac, who died six months later, and Josephine, who was between two and three years old. A little while later, she was shot and crippled by a farmer, who took her to the zoo. There, with the best possible care, she was nursed back to health.

Except for the period 1948-1951 spent at Aransas, Josephine remained at Audubon until her death. Her first mate at the zoo was an old bird named Pete; they produced two eggs but neither hatched. When Pete died, he was replaced by Crip, a flightless bird who had been "grounded" at Aransas in 1945.

Josephine and Crip produced George and Georgette in 1957, Pepper in 1958, and Peewee in 1961. Zoo officials hope that these will have offspring.

Can another bird fill the void? Researchers hope so. A whooper named Rosie has been transferred from the San Antonio Zoo to mate with George.

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